How to Create a Church and Community Profile

An important task in preparing to consider pastoral candidates for future ministry is the production of a church and community profile. This will be an important document as it serves as an initial introduction to prospective ministers, but is also a helpful way of focusing the church community on its key priorities, character and aspirations for the future.

Some important points to remember:

* This is a profile that describes who you are to any prospective ministry candidate; it is not a profile of your ideal minister. It is important that you keep the process focused on “What kind of church are we seeking to be?” and not “What kind of minister are we seeking to find?”
* This is the means by which you will introduce yourself to any prospective minister – remember that not only the text, but the layout, graphics and choice of pictures will say a lot about your priorities and ethos as a church.

The key elements of the profile will be:

* History, membership and general information
* Overview of the local community and church life
* Activities and organizations
* Church vision for the future
* Practical ministry matters

**History of Membership, Attendance and General Information**

The history of your church will be useful in giving a potential candidate the context for your work and witness. However, you should avoid making this too long or detailed, but focus on anything which you feel has particular relevance to how the church functions today.

You should also give some indication of the age profile of the members and attenders, however there is no need to give a full numerical breakdown. It is helpful to include either here or in the next section the proportion of members who live in the immediate neighbourhood and how typical the congregation is of the local community.

It is also good to include some details about the church buildings, specifically indicating their age, size and general condition. It is important too, to express something of the church’s relationship with the local community.

You should also include information on how the church is structured and run, particularly in relation to deacons, elders, leadership team, other office holders, and any employed/voluntary staff. This does not need to be a lengthy theological treatise, but rather a simple indication of the current form of governance.

**Activities and Organizations**

You should list the various activities which the church runs, giving some indication of the group’s general relationship with the church; its purpose and role within the wider vision of the church and any expectations that they may have on a future minister.

**Church Vision for the Future**

An important part of determining the ideal skills in a new pastor is a sense of where the church wants to go in the next 5-10 years.

If you have current and relevant mission, vision and values statements, these should be included in your church and community profile. If they are outdated, then this would be a great time to have a discussion regarding whether you want to work on vision before finding your next pastoral leader, or whether you prefer to choose the leader before working on the vision. Both approaches have value, and not every church has the same perspective! Either way, vision will be playing a critical role as your church moves forward.

**Practical Ministry Matters**

You should also include a section which outlines the benefits that are available to the pastor. Consider first those things which the church or wider Fellowship family are able to offer. This would include such things as health care or pension (or RRSP contributions). It may also include consideration of expenses, personal development costs, vacation, prayer retreats or sabbaticals. If there is support for housing, you would want to mention this. In each of these categories, most churches do not list actual financial numbers in their church profile but they do want the candidate to know that the church is aware of these considerations.

It may be helpful to mention some of the great aspects of your local community, especially if you are in a town or region that is less well known. Write a short paragraph that describes why living there is an awesome experience due to weather, or sports, or outdoor life, or community arts. In virtually every community in our region there are wonderful things to enjoy. Be sure to say what they are.